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Editors Note

A Tribute To Watt

In looking through a collection of old newspaper clippings recently, I discovered an article with a headline, "Oh, For The Life of a Candidate."

This clipping included the picture of Watkins M. Abbitt, then candidate for the United States Congress from the Fourth District of Virginia to fill the vacancy created by the death of Rep. Patrick H. Drewry. The year was 1948.

The article pictures the weather similiar to that which we have experienced recently with a few inches of snow on the ground and candidate Abbitt riding in a horse drawn sleigh borrowed from his neighbor to get to his office that day.

I believe the citizens of the old Fouth District, State of Virginia and Nation should take their hats off to Congressman Abbitt for the 25 years of dedicated service which he rendered so faithfully. He was dedicated to his country and constituents because he believed and stood firm upon the ideals and pinciples for which this great nation was founded. Those ideals and principles made this nation great in the eyes of the world and Representative Watkins M. Abbitt grew very tall and great in statue in the eyes of his constituents because he believed and practiced them during his many years of service.

We say thank you, Watt Abbitt, for your dedicated leadership during these 25 years in shaping our nation, state and district. We sincerely hope that you will continue even now since your retirement from Congress to use your influence and leadership in our community, district and state. Your leadership and influence is needed badly in the next gubernatorial election of this great Commonwealth of Virginia.

Watt, the people of this county, district, state and nation are very grateful to you and your able staff for the many years of public service. We cannot say thank you enough. It is our prayer that you will now in your retirement have the time to enjoy the many things you before did not have time to enjoy.

We need men of courage, fortitude, stamina, faith, honesty and dedication such as the Honorable Watkins M. Abbitt to serve today and the tomorrows in the many public offices of our counties, towns, cities, states and nation.

J. Franklin Vaughan

January 11, 1973

Editor
The Times-Virginian

Sir:

The majority report of the Pari-mutuel Betting Study Commission is one that bespeaks a preconceived idea to promote pari-mutuel betting legalization in Virginia. It is an admission in itself that the proposal is fraught with peril but seeks to alleviate the minds of the opposition with a system of controls that even a Hitler or Mussolini would have been unable to carry out with their people.

Its report that in other areas where pari-mutuel betting has been installed has not had adverse effects on business, crime and increased gambling is not borne out by the facts. Testimony by judges, police commissioners and other concerned citizens rebut their conclusions.

The implication that the opposition is composed primarily of religious fanatics is ludicrous. Concerned citizens in every walk of life who have been provided with the facts are strongly opposed to the proposed legislation to legalize. The Assembly should take due note of this.

Every member of the General Assembly should carefully read the minority report which presents irrefutable evidence why the pari-mutuel betting bill should not be passed.

Fra[illegible] R. Coleman

The Paster Speaks

"The Cloudy Chariot"

Psal . . . 104:3 "Who maketh . . . the clouds his chariot."

Have you ever noticed how the Lord associates himself with clouds? Jehovah not only came in a thick cloud at Sinai but in a contrasting bright one upon Mt. Herman at the transfiguration. Jesus ascended to Heaven in a cloud and he's coming back upon those same fluffy billows of the atmosphere. yes, clouds are the chariot in which God rides! One cannot escape the application that those things which often appear to be the foreboding mist of trouble are actually the heavenly conveyers of God's grace. They are big with mercy, the clouds of life bring his matchless presence into our souls in a new and refreshing way. It is said that in one of the German art galleries there is a painting called "Cloud-Lane" It hangs at the end of a long dark hall. First glance appears to be a huge ugly daub of confused color -- completely unattractive and forboding. As you walk toward it, however, the picture takes shape. Close inspection reveals a mass of exquisite cherub-like faces. When you finally stand next to it you see revealed a lovely painting of an innumerable company of Angels. Mr. Cuyler in commenting on this says "How often the soul that is frightened by trial sees nothing but a repulsive mass of broken expectations and confused hope!

But if that soul instead of fleeing away into unbelief and despair, draws near to God, it's soon discovered that the cloud is full of the angels of mercy!

If there is a cloud in your life, remember God wants to use it as a chariot to ride deeper into the very heart of your soul that he may shed abroad the light of his comfort and the power of his grace. Oh that we might learn to sing with the poet, "He will go before us, night will be as day, clouds may vail the future fears haunt and dismay, He will go before us, He will point the way!" Without an occasional cloud the refreshing and fertilizing showers of blessings cannot fall upon the soul.

If the dark shadows gather as you go along;

Do not grieve for their coming, sing a cheery song.

There is joy for the taking, it will soon be light;

Ev'ry cloud wears a rainbow if your heart keeps right.

Rev. Earnie W. Lucas
Bible Baptist Church
Appomattox, Va.

The Sunday School Lesson

HERBERT C. BRADSHAW
P. O. Box 1833
Durham, N. C. 27702

Comment on the International Sunday School lesson for January 21. 1973 **God's Concern For His People** Scripture: Ezekiel 34

"And you are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, says the Lord God."
Ezekiel 34:31

Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel use the analogy of negligent and destructive shepherds to describe the wicked and idolatrous leadership in the nation of Judah. Both portray God as gathering again His scattered flock, the people of Judah, and raising up faithful shepherds to tend it. Ezekiel specifically identifies the shepherd to come as "my servant David," a promise of the Messiah. Jeremiah, after foreseeing "shepherds . . . who will care for them," foretold that God would "raise up for David a righteous Branch" in whose "days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell safely."

To a people under dreadful siege, to whom Jeremiah was delivering God's message, and to a people despondent in exile, to whom Ezekiel was speaking God's word, these were prophecies of hope. Both messages assured the afflicted people, both in besieged Jerusalem and in exile in Mesopotamia, that God, despite all the trouble and hardship they were experiencing, was at work in history to accomplish His purpose which would be beneficial to them.

The use of the figure of shepherd and flock, to represent the relationship of God and His people, is familiar in both Scripture and church history. Probably the best known and most loved of all the Psalms begins "The Lord is my shepherd" and continues in a tender and feeling account of the care a loving shepherd gives his sheep. Jesus described Himself as the good shepherd and drew a sharp distinction between the good shepherd who "lays down his life for his sheep" and the hireling who, when he sees the wolf coming, leaves the sheep to be attacked and scattered. In Christian usage, the company of believers is often designated "flock" and its spiritual leader pastor, a word which means shepherd. The essential characteristic of the pastor is "the shepherd heart," a phrase Douglas Southall Freeman applied to one of the foremost ministers of this century, George W. Truett.

The Scriptural background for this International Sunday School lesson describes the conduct of the faithless shepherds and promises that God will gather the scattered sheep and care for them, culminating in the affirmation of the shepherd-flock relationship of God and believers, "And you are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, says the Lord God."

While Ezekiel's message was directed to his fellow exiles to encourage hope and to strengthen faith, it has relevance for the people of God today. Just as negligent, faithless, and greedy shepherds in ancient Israel and Judah allowed the flock committed to their care to be abused and scattered, so negligent, faithless, and greedy shepherds today may allow the flock committed to their care to be abused and scattered. The term shepherd should not be limited in application to the professional clergy, but should include both ministerial and lay leadership in the religious world.

Declining interest in the church, the widespread withdrawal of people -- especially young people -- from the church as an institution, increasing immorality and crime, the credibility gaps between secular and religious leadership and the people -- all these call concerned believers to an examination of the kind and quality of shepherding being done in today's world. There are signs that the flock has already begun to be scattered. It is important to find out why and to determine what needs to be done to gather it together again and to prevent further scattering. Believers must come to grips with this challenge if they are to measure up to the responsibility committed to them to be watchmen for God in today's world.

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